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## THE JEWISH APOCALYPSES.

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*The Book of Enoch—Book of Parables—Psalms of Solomon—Assumption of Moses.*

Although post-exilic and inter-Testament Judaism was characterized chiefly by the development of a radical and to a great extent one sided and formalistic Legalism, yet the nomistic principle was not the only factor and force that controlled the ideas and ideals of the people in those non-prophetic but nevertheless very historic centuries. The questions of the age were such that an exclusive consideration and study of the Law did not answer all the problems and perplexities that demanded answers. The fate of Israel, especially its condition of servitude to heathen masters, when compared with the promises of its future glory and supremacy, presented so many interrogation points, that their solution could not but engage the attention of thoughtful minds. The author of one part of the Book of Enoch laments: "We hoped to be the head and we became the tail;" and the literature of the period abounds with wails and lamentations over the deplorable lot of the people now subjected to the power of the sinners. From the days of Zerubbabel the history of the faithful is one of continuous humiliation, defeats and suppressions. The bitter realities of the present, the tyranny of the Persian, Syriac, and Roman rule, seemed to belie the picture of the golden age as depicted by the pen of the prophets for the encouragement of the people in their obedience to the Law of the Lord. It seemed as if God had forgotten his words and that his arm had become too weak to perform what he had promised. Seemingly the closest study of the Law could not unravel these enigmas; accordingly, we find side by side with the predominating literature of the Law a class of works that deal with the intricacies of the present and seek to harmonize Israel's fate and Israel's divinely

appointed destiny. This is the deeply interesting and instructive apocalyptic literature. In all these the object is, more or less apologetic, the vindication of divine wisdom and providence in its dealings with the people, and the assurance that the day of consummation, when all things shall be adjusted, is near. Those that were written before the days of Christ possess not only the historical interest for the understanding of Israel's hopes and fears, but also because they undoubtedly exerted a considerable influence in molding, the religious sentiments, thoughts, feelings and beliefs of the Jews in the New Testament era, and have a special value for the historic study of the New Testament books and their contents. The history of the New Testament Times as also New Testament Theology are largely debtors to this class of literature so long despised as mere "curiosities," but now being gradually understood in their true historic importance and value. A brief sketch of the historical background and chief contents of one or two of these unique compositions will not be a work of supererogation.

For a number of excellent reasons the Book of Enoch takes the precedent of all the works of this class. Intrinsically and historically it is the most unique and valuable of its kind. It is the only one that is quoted by a New Testament writer (Jude 14, 15); its messianic ideal is the highest produced by an uninspired pen; it was beyond doubt a powerful factor in the make-up of the religious and theological atmosphere in which the New Testament age lived and moved and had its being; it possesses a renewed interest at present from the discovery of the new Greek fragments in the Gizeh manuscript and the publication of a new English translation by R. H. Charles, of England, on the basis of an amended Ethiopic text, which is especially valued for the text critical study of this work.

In its present shape the Book of Enoch is a conglomerate of at least three different elements, written by three different authors at different times. The oldest though theologically considered not the most important portion, is embraced in chaps. 1-37 and 72-104, which also contains a few interpolations by the so-called Noachian fragmentist. Internal evidences point to the fact that

this portion was written before the death of Judas Maccabæus, *i.e.*, before 160 B. C., although quite a number of scholars claim a later period, generally that of John Hyrkanus for this portion of the book. In all probability it is a production of the chasidim or pious party of patriots, who stood up for the traditional nationality, worship and life of Judaism. The historical background, the ever memorable struggle for autonomy against heathen oppression, and the immediate needs of the hour have largely given matter and manner to the book. At no period in Israel's history was the danger of disintegration of nationality and religion greater. Especially did Antiochus Epiphanes demand practically the total annihilation of Israel as a people and as a religious community.

When surrounded by such dangers it is not surprising that the voice of pseudo-prophecy resounds. There were problems to solve; anxious inquiries to answer, downcast hearts to cheer, failing hopes to be reëstablished. Could God have deserted his people? What had become of the promised glories of the Messianic age? To answer these fundamental questions and others arising out of them, was the principal object of the author. His aim is largely to vindicate God's guidance of the people: and secondly, to give a renewed prediction of the sure fulfilment of the divine promises. Apologetic in purpose, the book emphasizes the almighty power of God, his ability to accomplish his purposes; God's omnipotence is demonstrated by an appeal to Israel's history. A symbolical account of the chosen people from the beginning to the days of the writer is given, to which, without any break whatever, is added the predictions of the near future. In this historical survey the evidences are furnished, not however purposely so stated, for an apology and defense of God's actions. The divine guidance of Israel, the chief events in the history of theocracy, and then the sure punishment of all her past foes are portrayed and left to tell their own story. In all this Israel is seen as the special object of God's providence and love and this furnishes a guarantee for the future.

And this future is really what the writer wishes to portray. Here, where logic and facts fail him, he resorts to rhetoric. He is consistent with his character as a pseudo-Enoch not to quote

directly from the Old Testament ; a fact, however, that may also, at least in part, be explained by the difference between his eschatological views and those presented by the inspired prophets. In glowing terms he predicts the deliverance of Israel from its troubles, the subjugation of its enemies, and the glories of the future. According to his views, the measure of Israel's woes is now full and the immediate future will bring succor and salvation. This is not to come by the natural development of events, but by an especial and powerful interference of Jehovah. The Lord will come to the rescue of the persecuted faithful. The hosts of heaven and the power of nature alike contribute to this great revolution. From Azazel, the chief of fallen angels, down to the meanest enemy of God's children, the sinners shall all endure terrible punishments. Then the sway of the righteous shall begin. The character of this sway is chiefly political, and, only subordinate and subservient to this, also religious. The establishment of a universal recognition of Jehovah, with Jerusalem as a central seat of worship, is a factor in this rule, apparently only because thereby Israel's glory is made all the more glorious. Nature, which suffered by man's fall, will participate in this restoration, but only as a means to the end of honoring Israel. This fundamental idea is the future greatness of Israel as a nation of the faithful brought about by the intervention of their God. After the new order of things has once been established, God, so to say, again returns to his retirement, and leaves the government in the hands of the Messiah. This latter person takes no part in the organization of the kingdom ; he only appears in "the world to come," as the Messianic kingdom is technically called by Jewish theology. He is one of the people, not a messenger from on High, or of divine nature and power. He grows out of the reëstablished faithful ; and, characteristically, he is distinguished from his fellows only by superior strength and power. He is really only *primus inter pares*. In his heart the rule of the new kingdom is placed, and this kingdom shall be without end.

Deeper in contents and more systematic in presentation is the second part of the Book of Enoch, embracing chapters 37-71 and called by the writer himself "The Book of Parables." It

undoubtedly existed one time as a separate composition and was later incorporated into the older book. Its character, tone, tendency and object differ materially from those of the first part or groundwork. The historical substratum presupposed by its contents is different from that necessary to understand the other portions. No wars and rumors of war threaten the existence of the people. The subtler weapons of religious indifference or outspoken atheism in the circles of the aristocratic leaders threaten to leaven the whole mass of the people. The rulers of the people no longer subject themselves to the spirit of Jehovah. They are the exact opposites of what the theocratic idea of royalty in Israel would demand. Or, to be historically more definite, the political heads of the people are the representatives of the Hellenistic movement, which, in the centuries preceding the advent of Christ, endangered Israel's individuality. Herod and his family, this tribe of monsters from the alien house of Esau, were the recognized leaders of this agitation. And against this direful school of thought, their theology and their morals, the Parables of Enoch are directed. They expose the godless character of the heathenist innovations in the people's faith, and prophesy the speedy exaltation of the despised and humble few who have walked in the paths of the fathers. In no other apocalyptic work do the people of God appear so distinctly as an exclusive and united band. Again and again they are called "The congregation of the righteous." As the dangers that threaten them are almost exclusively of an intellectual or rather spiritual and moral character, the deliverance of the true Israel shall correspond to these evils. The general, more transcendental way of thinking displayed throughout the Parables is shown especially in this connection, where God does not, as is done in the groundwork, come to the relief personally, but sends his messenger, the Messiah. This idea, the deliverance of the people from the ways of false wisdom through the Messiah, is the peculiar and distinctive features of this book. Even the characteristics of the Messiah are dictated by the work he is to perform. As he is above all things to teach the truth, he is described as endowed with superior and divine wisdom. In chapter 46 we find it plainly and closely taught

that the Messiah is superhuman and pre-existent for the work he is to perform. He shall arrive in the near future. To enforce this wisdom he will be given the power of divinity. Those who have abused their high stations of influence and have led the people astray, will receive the punishment their deeds have merited. For the Messiah shall also come to judge, and only after this task has been performed will he establish his kingdom. Jerusalem again is the center and the people's glory shall be a temporal supremacy. This feature, however, is not so strongly emphasized here. The blessings are largely of an ethical character, including ever the blessed state of sinlessness — *i. e.*, absolute sway of God's law. In fact, the author of the Parables reaches a height of thought, both dogmatically and ethically, that is marked by no other writer before the New Testament save by the inspired. For this reason not a few have thought that he had been under Christian influences. This, however, is manifestly not the case. He is and remains a Jew, writing with the prejudices and carnal hopes of late Pharisaism.

Entirely different in outward form but quite similar in thought to the Parables of Enoch are the so-called Psalms of Solomon. The eighteen odes bearing his name are the only productions of a lyrical character we possess from that period. Their entirely Jewish character is apparent from the mould in which they have been cast. Like the Psalms of the Old Testament, these imitations are a factory of thought rather than of force. No effort is made at a metrical system, as in the Homeric hexameter of the Sibylline books, but a successful *Parallelismus membrorum* is carried out. Here, too, the contents point out with sufficient accuracy the historical background, and this again goes far in explaining the general tendency and eschatology of the composition. The sad calamity of the people again is the theme inspiring the pen of the writer. The misfortune has this time come from the West. The contests all point to the conquest of Jerusalem by Pompey in 63 B. C. as described by Josephus and Tacitus as the date of the composition of these lyrics, or rather, they were written after his death, 48 B. C.

The author frankly acknowledges that these calamities are

not altogether understood. The sins and lawlessness of the people are the cause. Pharisaically his doctrine of both reward and punishment is that of merit. Men choose between good and evil, and are rewarded accordingly. The central thought is given, 9:9, in these words:

“He who lives righteously treasures up for himself eternal  
life before the Lord

But he who lives unrighteously is himself the cause of his  
soul's destruction.”

From this historical and dogmatical basis the apocalyptic prophecies flow naturally over against the godless rule of the later Maccabean princes, and in view of the high-handed injustice of the Roman general, the pseudo-prophet remembers the promises that have been attached to the seed of the house of David. He takes up this peculiar thread and spins it out. Deliverance in such a crisis can come only from a powerful Messiah, and he shall come as a mighty potentate. So strongly is the advent of “David's Son” emphasized, that we can almost imagine we are hearing the Pharisees of the New Testament. The Messiah's mission will be of a double character. The sinners will feel the fire of his wrath and the saints the wisdom of his instructions. The unruly elements shall be removed from Zion and a new rule be established, at the head of which is the Messiah, sent for this purpose by God. The nations that disregard the laws will flee from his face or be destroyed; and the saints shall rule, being collected from the entire Dispersion. They will be the children of God; the land will be divided among the tribes; no stranger will be allowed in the sacred congregation. The heathen nations will subject themselves, fearing the Lord. The Messiah is powerful, but has nothing that transcends the human, although he is declared free from sin, and his rule shall last forever.

Of the Apocryphon called by the Greek fathers “Assumption of Moses,” which had been lost since the days of Origen and Clement of Alexandria, a few fragments have been found in recent decades. Its contents claim to be the last exhortation and instruction of Moses just before his departure to heaven,



given to his successor. Prophetically the future of the chosen people is portrayed in general outline and on theocratical principles. The history proceeds in the manner of apocryphal writings down to the Roman expedition under Varus, 4 B. C., against Jerusalem, and then the writing suddenly turns prophetically to the Messianic future. Roman supremacy will be cast aside; Satan will have an end; the Celestial One will sit in the seat of government and in holy wrath destroy the enemies of the people. Earth and heaven will show the works of the last times; and then the happy age for the faithful will have arrived.

Other apocalyptic visions and ideals could readily be mentioned here, especially those found in the Jewish pre-Christian sections of the Sibylline books and other prominent writings of that time and kind; but the leading ideas are practically the same, although presented in a kaleidoscopic variety of shapes and forms. Since the historic method of studying the biblical books is being accepted and adopted practically by the entire protestant Christian scholarship, the value of these writings is seen and appreciated. As purely literary productions their value may be little or nothing; but as expressions of a school of thought in Israel, of the hopes and fears, false though they be, of the down-trodden people of God in the days of their humility, and as aids for the study of this world, of the thought and teachings of the New Testament era, this apocalyptic literature repays searching investigation and careful study.